

VZCZCXRO4092  
OO RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHGB #3375/01 2820721  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 090721Z OCT 07  
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3789  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003375

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/08/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: SADR AND BADR KISS AND MAKE-UP, BUT FOR HOW LONG?

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2906 (KARBALA CRISIS)

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 3367 (VP ON SADRIST SPLITS)

Classified By: Political Counselor Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Iraq's two most powerful Shia political entities, the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council (ISCI) and the Sadr Movement, have entered into a formal written agreement that seeks to avoid armed conflict between their respective militias, ISCI's Badr and Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM). (Note: While Badr Corps maintains that it has fully transitioned to social/political organization status, it has not moved too far from its origins as an armed group. End Note), Signed on October 6 by Moqtada al-Sadr and ailing ISCI Chairman Abdel Aziz al-Hakeem, the agreement calls upon the "cultural, media, and educational organizations" of both parties (read Badr and JAM) to promote rapprochement and desist from divisive actions, and provides for the establishment of a "Joint High Commission" with provincial branches that will attempt to prevent disputes from escalating into armed clashes similar to those which erupted after JAM's ill-fated August attempt to seize some of Shia Islam's holiest shrines in Karbala. Issued a little over one month after Moqtada's order to "freeze" JAM activities, the Hakeem/Sadr agreement gives further credence to the view that widespread Shia street disgust over the Karbala incident unsettled the Sadr Movement and compelled Moqtada to adopt a more accommodating public posture and assert control over JAM activities. The parties have not yet named members of the "Joint High Commission" to implement the agreement, and it remains unclear whether and for how long the JAM and Badr militias will abide by the terms and spirit of the pact. If the agreement is implemented in a sincere and effective manner, however, the Hakeem/Sadr deal has the potential to greatly reduce Shia-on-Shia violence while ISCI and the Sadrists compete for supremacy among Iraq's Shia majority. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Already bad, relations between the two rival groups threatened to degenerate into full-scale warfare six weeks ago in the wake of armed JAM-Badr clashes at the gates of Shia shrines during an important Shia pilgrimage in Karbala, ensuing JAM attacks on ISCI/Badr offices in Baghdad and Southern Iraq, and JAM's assassination of two ISCI/Badr-affiliated southern provincial governors (ref A). ISCI official Haitham al-Husseini told us the level of violence surprised senior leaders from both sides and motivated them to begin negotiations several weeks ago to reduce tensions. In an October 6 meeting with the Ambassador just hours before public announcement of the agreement (ref B), Iraqi Vice President - and senior ISCI official - Adel Abdel Mehdi characterized the deal as something akin to a mutual non-aggression pact and said it had been concluded directly with Moqtada, since agreements with lower-ranking Sadrists have limited scope of effect and validity. Concluded "in the atmosphere of Ramadan to strengthen relations between the two parties and to preserve noble Islamic and national interests," the pact consists of three

provisions. First, it upholds "the necessity to respect and protect Iraqi blood of any side or sect" because violence ("an offense upon the sanctity of blood") violates law and morality. Second, it calls upon "all cultural, media, and educational organizations" of the two parties to advance the spirit of friendship and rapprochement and to not engage in any activity that leads to division and hatred or is otherwise against agreement principles. Although neither Sadr's JAM nor ISCI's Badr would ever be confused for a "cultural, media, or educational organization" in the ordinary meaning of the terms, it is clear that this article was directed at the two blood-stained militias and their violent activities. Third, the agreement provides for the establishment of a "Joint High Commission" with branches in all provinces "to work toward rapprochement, prevent disorder, control potential problems, and implement all aspects of the agreement."

13. (C) The agreement drew effusive public praise from Prime Minister al-Maliki, who hailed it an important step toward national unity and alleviating conflict between "sons of religion (presumably Shia Islam) and the nation." Given that ISCI/Badr fighters were reportedly badly outgunned and overpowered during August attacks by the Sadrists, it came as little surprise that ISCI official al-Husseini told us his organization is extremely pleased with the agreement as a step forward in ISCI's long-term goal of "containing" the Sadrists. He and other ISCI contacts maintained that the most important agreement element is formation of the commissions that, through dialogue, can prevent minor disputes from escalating into violent altercations, and can investigate and apportion responsibility for clashes that do occur. Contacts from the Fadhila Party told us their Sadrism Council of Representative colleagues characterized the pact

BAGHDAD 00003375 002 OF 002

as strictly a "security agreement" that has no bearing on the Sadrism Movement's political direction or decision to withdraw from the Shia United Iraqi Alliance in parliament. The head of Sadr's Karbala office told the Iraqi media that while he welcomes the agreement, he has not received any instructions from Sadr regarding implementation and commission formation, and ISCI officials confirmed that committee members from either side have not been named.

Comment

-----

14. (C) Issued a little over one month after Moqtada's order to "freeze" JAM activities, the Hakeem/Sadr agreement gives further credence to the view that widespread Shia street disgust over JAM's audacious late-August attempt to seize the sacred Shia shrines of Karbala unsettled the Sadr Movement and compelled Sadr to adopt a more accommodating public posture and attempt to assert control over JAM activities. As with any agreement, particularly those to which a party as erratic as Sadr is a signatory, follow-on implementation is key and it remains very much an open question whether and for how long the "cultural, media, and educational organizations" of the two parties will abide by the agreement terms and uphold its "spirit of friendship and rapprochement." If the agreement is implemented in an effective manner, however, the Hakeem/Sadr deal has the potential to greatly reduce Shia-on-Shia violence and avert a "War for the South" between Iraq's two largest Shia political entities.

CROCKER